



NATIONAL CENTERS OF  
EXCELLENCE  
IN WOMEN'S HEALTH

# Incarcerated Women and the Criminal Justice System

## Health Resources and Care

December 2000

OFFICE ON WOMEN'S HEALTH  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

The National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health (CoEs) were established in 1996 by the Public Health Service's Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Their mandate is to establish and evaluate a new model health care system that unites women's health research, medical training, clinical care, public health education, community outreach, and the promotion of women in academic medicine. Their goal: to improve the health status of diverse women across the life span.

The health resources and care for incarcerated women and the criminal justice system are limited. It is hard to know where to begin when detailing the health needs of incarcerated women...because just about every other critical issue can make a difference in their health status. This brochure highlights activities and programs at the CoEs that address specific health resources and care related to incarcerated women and the criminal justice system.

### **Clinical Services**

#### **◆ Harvard University CoE**

Passageway (Boston Women's Hospital): In 1997, BWH, a partner of the Harvard University CoE, created its domestic violence intervention program, Passageway. The goal of Passageway is to assist patients and employees who are unsafe, controlled, threatened or hurt by current or former intimate partners. Passageway partners with the community to develop and support a coordinated response to domestic violence and to link survivors to safe and effective resources. Passageway at BWH

and the Health Center Domestic Violence Project, a collaboration between BWH and its affiliated health centers, provide:

- Advocacy services and consultation: Domestic violence advocates provide free, voluntary, and confidential services to patients and employees who are experiencing domestic violence. Services include risk assessment and safety planning crisis intervention and on-going supportive counseling, assistance in negotiating complex systems (e.g., health care, courts, Department of Transitional Assistance), and help in understanding and accessing legal rights and the resources available to the community.

Passageway staff is integrally involved in a number of community linkage projects, including:

- Conference of Boston Teaching Hospitals Domestic Violence Advisory Council: A collaboration of the eleven Boston teaching hospitals to improve the health care response to domestic violence throughout the City, meets regularly to collaborate on patient-care and program efforts and to train staff. Five community collaborators are members of this council; including Jane Doe, Inc. (statewide domestic violence and sexual assault coalition), Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, Boston Policy Department, and the Boston Public Health Commission. Currently, a number of members are planning a series of interdisciplinary meetings for agencies/providers working with battered women and sexual assault survivors.
- Luncheon to Honor Boston's Advocates: BWH has hosted annual luncheons, in space donated by the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, to bring together advocates from multiple systems (e.g., health

care, criminal justice, battered women's and rape crisis programs) to honor the challenging work advocates do to increase safety for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

◆ University of Illinois at Chicago CoE

In collaboration with the Circuit Court of Cook County, the University of Illinois at Chicago CoE's (UIC) Department of Psychiatry has launched a new mental health clinical in the Domestic Violence Courthouse of Cook County. The clinic's aim is to serve women with mental health problems related to domestic violence, as well as their children and other family members. A full time social worker and case manager who conduct initial assessments and facilitate referrals to needed care staff it. UIC clinicians will provide ongoing health services.

◆ Indiana University CoE

Incarcerated women are the highest risk women in practically all areas of health. However, they are a relatively accessible group who are very interested in receiving for health knowledge, intervention, and treatment. They also are often very eager to help research efforts to improve the lives of themselves and their families. At Indiana Women's Maximum Security Prison, the age range is 14 years to 79 years old. They are about 40% minority. There is a special unit for pregnant women, the medically ill, the mentally ill, and the offenders who are healthy but have long-term sentences. Seventy-five percent of the offenders have suffered from some type of substance abuse and most enter the prison as mothers. Most have been physically or sexually abused or neglected as children. These women can teach professionals about the true barriers to "healthy lifestyles and following through on health care instructions or appointments."

Sixty women over 40 at the Indiana Prison recently underwent bone density screening. Nineteen had low bone density, and 4 had possible osteoporosis. The following recommendations were made: 1) DexaScans should be provided for all those with scores in the osteoporotic range; 2) oral calcium supplementation should be given to those with low bone density mass because of the difficulty in consuming adequate calcium in their diets; 3) daily weight-bearing exercise should be encouraged; 4) screening should be expanded to include more women.

♦ University of Washington CoE

The HMC site at the UW COE provides all outpatient obstetric, gynecologic, primary care and gyn surgical services for women from the King County jail. COE providers at HMC Women's Clinic have partnered with the jail to provide timely and personalized care for incarcerated women. Effort is made to provide coordinated care between the healthcare providers at both facilities through written reports and direct phone consultations between doctors and nursing staff. Difficulties transporting incarcerated patients to the HMC Women's Clinic often lead to arrival of these patients at times other than those scheduled. The staff and providers have developed flexible models to accommodate these scheduling challenges so that the incarcerated women are seen in a timely fashion. The goal of this program is provision of seamless care for all women.

### **Professional Education**

♦ University of Puerto Rico CoE

"Between Women" is an educational activity on prevention/early detection of breast cancer, menopause, perimenopause

and osteoporosis was offered on February 16, 2000, at the Federal Prison, in San Juan. The WHCoE sponsored the activity. The College of Health-Related Professions (CHRP) Health Education Program students planned and offered the program directed to provide health prevention information to female inmates. A total of 64 inmates attended.

◆ University of Wisconsin-Madison CoE

Domestic Violence curriculum development: A grant was obtained entitled: Improving MD training on intimate violence and sexual assault, from the Office of Justice (PI: Skochelak, other participants from the CoE faculty: Stiles, Family Practice and Byers, General Medicine).

**Research**

◆ MCP Hahnemann University CoE

In early 1999, Drexel University granted a challenge grant to MCPHU's Institute for Women's Health and Drexel's Institute for Humanities and a cross-campus Women's Health Research Group was formed. The challenge grant has been used Colloquium on "Sexual Assault, Physical Abuse, and Drug Use Among Women with Drug Convictions," presented by Amy Hirsch, Supervising Attorney in the North Philadelphia Office of Community Legal Services.

◆ University of Washington CoE

Investigators from the School of Nursing are conducting a study, "Evaluation of a Doula Labor Support Pilot Project for Incarcerated Pregnant Women." The purpose of this study is to evaluate a new, multi-agency, collaborative pilot program that provides trained labor support (doula) to pregnant

women who deliver at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) while incarcerated at King County Correctional Facility.

### **Leadership**

- ◆ University of Puerto Rico CoE

College of Health Related Professions Health Education Bachelors Degree Program Project: Identify risk factors for HIV/AIDS infection in Puerto Rico women in Jails. CoE staff mentored female students in the development of research and presentation-related skills.

### **Community Outreach**

- ◆ Boston University Medical Center CoE and Harvard University CoE

Directory of Women's Health Resources in Boston. The Boston University CoE and the Harvard University CoE collaborated to create a Directory of Women's Health Resources in Boston. This directory contains 26 women's health categories that contain resources and referral organization in the Boston area for provider and patient information. The categories covered in the directory include the following: abuse (domestic violence and sexual assault), advocacy/policy groups, breast cancer resources, cancer resources, eating disorders/obesity, government resources, HIV/AIDS and other sexually related conditions, menopause, mental health, nutrition and exercise, occupational and environmental health issues, osteoporosis and arthritis, preventive health, reproductive health and pregnancy, smoking cessation, and substance abuse and addiction. There are

categories dedicated to specific groups such as adolescent health, elder women, homeless women, incarcerated and previously incarcerated women, lesbian and bisexual resources, uninsured/underinsured women, women as care taker, women of color, and women with disabilities.

♦ Harvard University CoE

On March 30, 2000, the Harvard CoE and their Committee to Advance the Health of Minority Women Presented “Diverse Women Celebrating Wellness in the New Millennium: Strategies for Women and Providers.” Attendees recommended the topic of women in prison for a future topic. This suggestion was incorporated into the planning process for the next year’s conference.

♦ University of Pennsylvania CoE

Death Review Task Force: Dr. Jane Ann Grisso has been working with a Death Review Task Force Committee in a first-of-its-kind citywide effort to create change in response to violence and women. The violence some women experience sometimes ends in death and the Death Review Task Force reconstructs a woman’s life to see if any agencies should have done something to prevent the women’s death. The task force reviews deaths of women under the age of 60. The task force is a monthly round table meeting with 30-40 representatives from agencies and organizations that work with victims of violence-including the district attorney, Women Against Abuse, Women in Transition, the Department of Human Services (DHS), police, substance abuse organizations, and city health clinics. Headway made by the task force thus far through their reviews and case-controlled studies point to a strong connection between violence and substance abuse. A



police sub-group of the death review is trying to make changes to incorporate substance abuse and mental health programs for addicted women on parole. The group is also working with DHS on programs for children who witnessed violence. To date, their review/research is still in progress.

◆ University of Michigan Health System CoE

In partnership with the School of Nursing and the Substance Abuse Research Center, the University of Michigan CoE Women's Health Resource Center provides health education materials and packets of information on various topics as requested by inmates.

**NATIONAL CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN WOMEN'S HEALTH  
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- University of California, San Francisco, San Francisco, CA,  
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- Harvard University, Boston, MA, Phone: 617-732-8798,  
Internet: [www.hmcnet.harvard.edu/coe/](http://www.hmcnet.harvard.edu/coe/)
- University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL, Phone:  
312-413-1924, Internet:  
[www.uic.edu/orgs/womenshealth/index.html](http://www.uic.edu/orgs/womenshealth/index.html)
- Indiana University School of Medicine, Indianapolis, IN, Phone:  
317-274-2754, Internet: [www.iupui.edu/~womenhlt/](http://www.iupui.edu/~womenhlt/)
- Magee-Womens Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA, Phone:  
412-641-6003, Internet: [www.magee.edu/cewh2.htm](http://www.magee.edu/cewh2.htm)
- MCP Hahnemann University, Philadelphia, PA,  
Phone: 215-842-7041, Internet:  
<http://www.mcphu.edu/institutes/iwh>
- University of Michigan Health System, Ann Arbor, MI, Phone:  
734-763-0984, Internet: [www.med.umich.edu/whrcctr.excel.html](http://www.med.umich.edu/whrcctr.excel.html)
- University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, Phone: 215-898-0147,  
Internet: [www.obgyn.upenn.edu/cewh/](http://www.obgyn.upenn.edu/cewh/)

University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR, Phone: 787-753-0090,  
Internet: [www.rcm.upr.edu/2klwhc](http://www.rcm.upr.edu/2klwhc)

Tulane and Xavier Universities of Louisiana, New Orleans, LA,  
Phone: 504-585-6156, Internet: [www.tulane.edu/~tuxcoe/](http://www.tulane.edu/~tuxcoe/)

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